

Motivating with Gamification: Benefits and Cautions

Language teachers have long used games, but gamification – the use of game elements in non-game settings – is more recent.

In this webinar, we will:

- explore the concept of gamification, including insights from psychology and research about motivational benefits and risks to avoid
- examine gamification in face-to-face and online classes, including ways to include gamification elements in ELT instruction
- review sample lesson plans to help you develop ways to use gamification in your classes



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Dr. Deborah Healey



An online and face-to-face teacher and teacher educator, Deborah writes and presents globally on pedagogy and appropriate use of technology in language teaching. A former President of TESOL International Association (2019-2020), she is a contributor to two *TESOL Technology Standards* publications, as well as *The TESOL Encyclopedia of English Language Teaching* and *The Routledge Handbook of Language Learning and Technology*.

Having used games extensively in her teaching, Deborah began researching gamification and gamifying her virtual and face-to-face courses in 2015. She finds the psychology of game-play fascinating, especially in teaching and learning.



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Motivating with Gamification: Benefits and Cautions



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Choose your quest!

Quest Goals: By the time our adventure ends, be ready to....

- **Basic:** explain how to gamify a class to a colleague
- **Intermediate:** gamify a regular activity or project in your class
- **Advanced:** gamify your whole class more effectively



Mapping our quest

During our journey today, we will:

- Define *gamification*
- Consider why to gamify in ELT settings
- Discuss how to get started with gamification
- Examine specific ways to gamify ELT activities



Let's get started...

- You will need a piece of paper.
- Draw a grid like this, with 2 rows and 8 columns.



| | Startup (100 pts) | Engagement | | | | | |
|---------------|----------------------|------------|--|--|--|--|--|
| Your alias | 100 | | | | | | |

alias = a “screen name” or game/quest identity



Classroom tip:

- Ask students to brainstorm fun/silly adjectives and nouns
- Combine words to make aliases: *SpeedyShoes BookwormKing StealthyRabbit EnglishWiz!*



Silent reflection:

What do you think these students are feeling?





Silent reflection:

Have you ever felt so deeply engaged that you didn't want to stop? If so, what were you doing?





Have your students ever seemed so fully engaged in a classroom activity?

What was it? **Describe it in the chat.**




Engagement

Did you respond in the chat about your students?

- If you did, give yourself 50 points in the Engagement column.



| | Startup (100 pts) | Engagement (50 pts) | Adjectives | Game mechanics | | | |
|---------------|----------------------|--|------------|-------------------|--|--|--|
| Your alias | |  LEVEL 1! | | | | | |

Gamification??



Gamification

Gamification is adding elements of games and gaming to regular activities that we may not normally think of as games.

- Business – to come back
- Training – to remember
- Education – to be engaged



Gamification elements

- **Game mechanics**
 - Points, badges, levels, progress chart, team play
- **Aesthetics**
 - Candy Crush; World of Warcraft
- **Game thinking**
 - Competition, cooperation, exploration, storytelling

Game thinking



Not students ... players!

Game thinking



Think of three adjectives to describe students.

Share them in the chat: Students = adjective, adjective, adjective

Game thinking



Now, think of three adjectives to describe players.


Share them in the chat: Players = adjective, adjective, adjective

Adjectives...

Did you respond in the chat with adjectives about “students” and “players”?

- If you did, give yourself 30 points for each adjective in the Adjectives column – maximum 240 points.



| | Startup | Engagement | Adjectives (30 each, 240 max) | Why gamify | | | |
|---------------|---------|------------|---|---------------|--|--|--|
| Your alias | | |  | | | | |

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Why gamify in ELT?

Our students use “game” as a verb

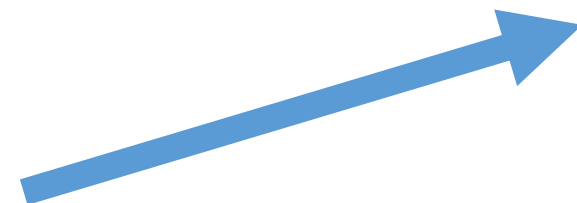
Classroom activities as “hard fun”

Sense of progress

Everyone starts at ZERO



Points
always go
UP



What about your students?



Do you think that making your classroom more game-like would motivate your students? How?


Share your ideas in the chat.

Why gamify

Did you respond in the chat with whether gamification might work for your students?

- If you did, give yourself 50 points! If you've done everything so far, you're now at Level 2!



| | Startup | Engagemt | Adjectives | Why gamify (50 pts) | | | |
|---------------|---------|----------|------------|---|--|--|--|
| Your alias | | | |  LEVEL 2! | | | |

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Gamifying: planning

1. Decide: Part of the course or the whole course
2. Calculate points for assignments
3. Think about achievements – levels or badges
4. Find “epic meaning”
5. Rename: *quests, tasks, party* (team)



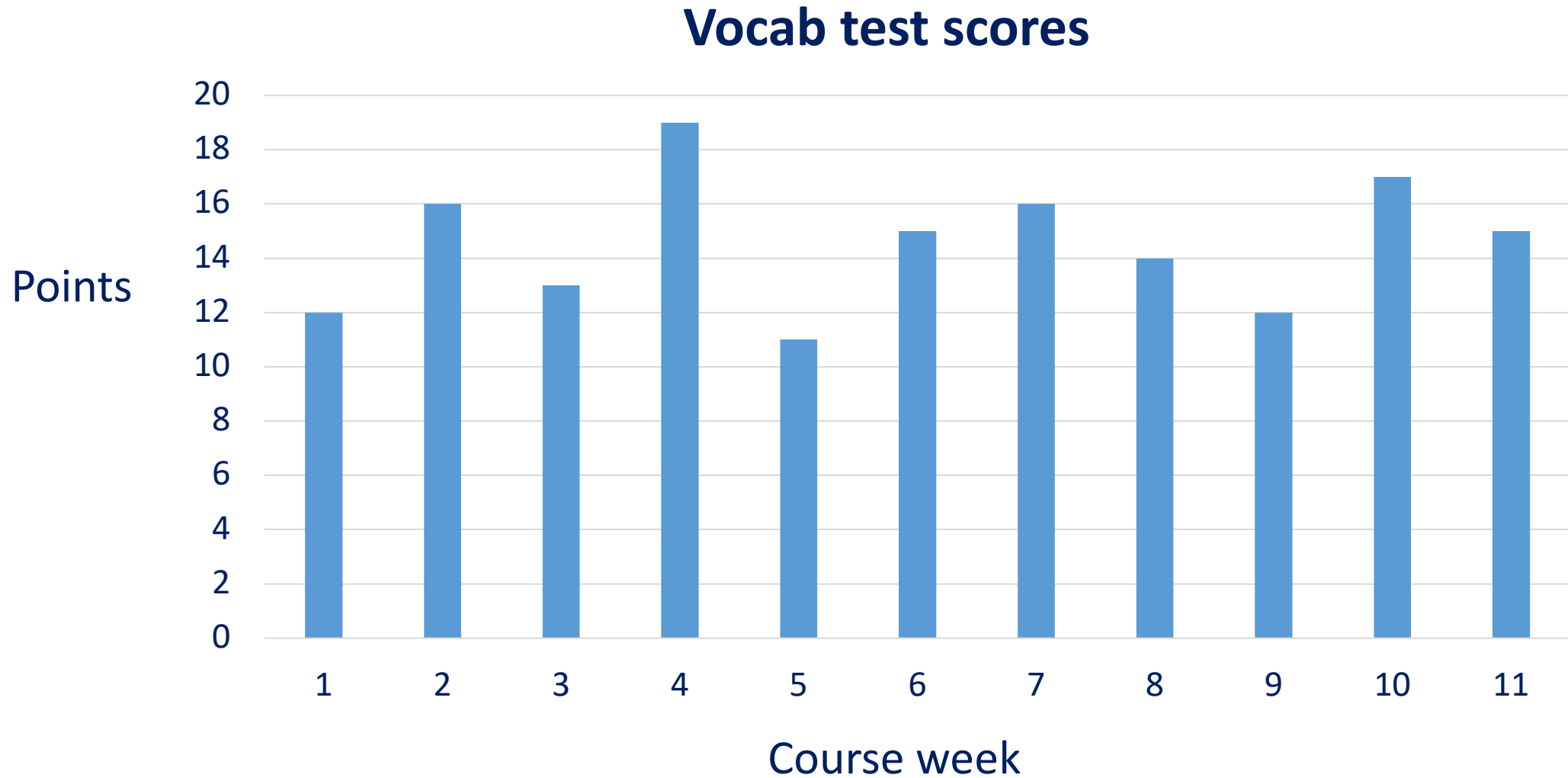
1. Deciding

Decide: Part of the course or the whole course

- You can start small
- A skill area, a project (project-based learning)
- Be consistent
- Whole course – plan ahead



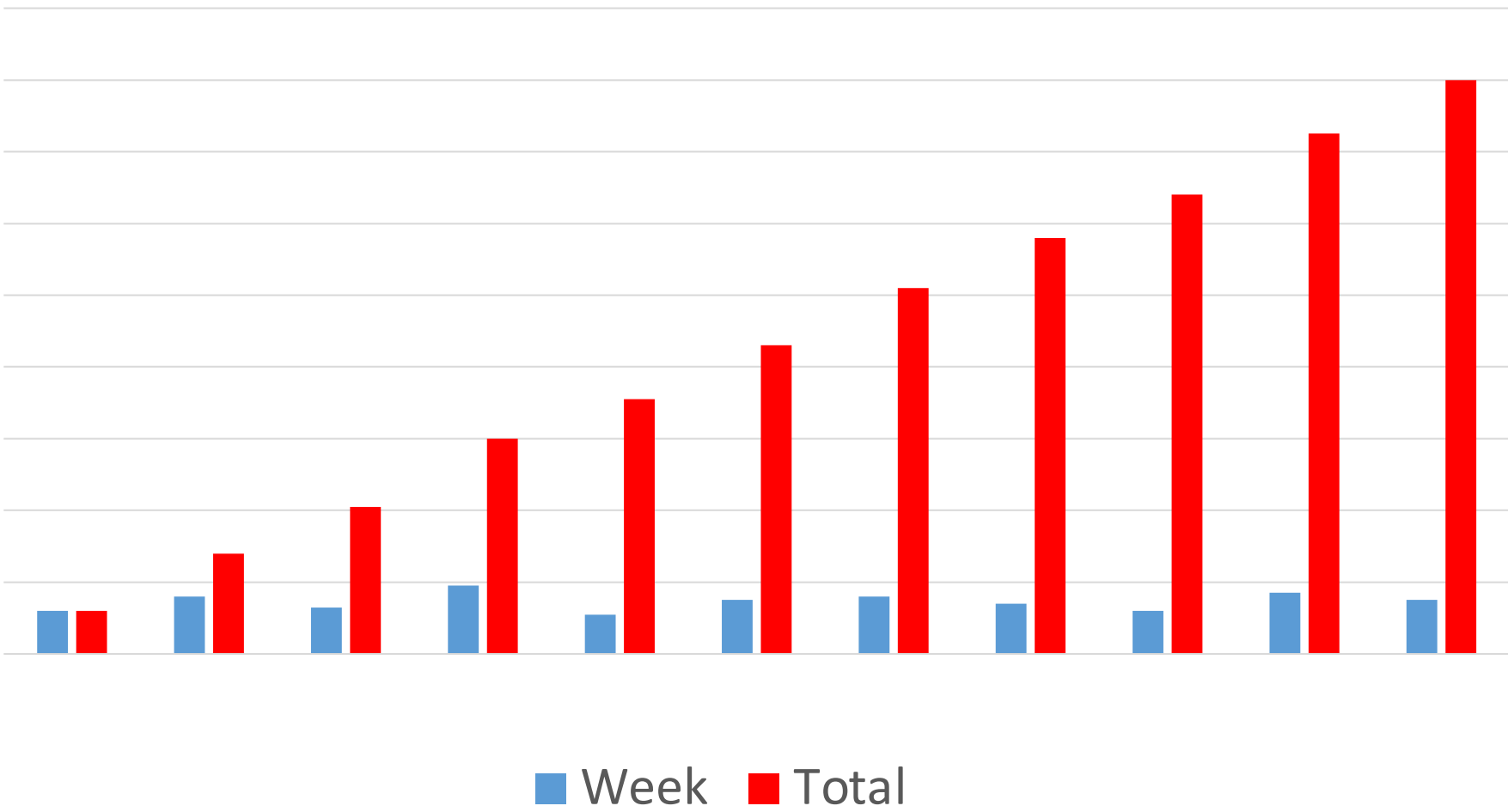
Vocabulary: Weekly word list score



Vocabulary: Progress over time

Vocab Progress Chart

Points



2. Calculate points and more

Assign points for assignments

- Experience points (XPs)
- Other points
 - What do you value? Collaboration, participation, behavior
 - You can have more than one scale
- Require more than just points – quests



Point system for MA CALL course

Discussions: 10 XPs for one post and 10 CPs for two comments

- 5 additional CPs for on-time, substantive responses to others

Tasks: 20-40 XPs per task; up to 20 CPs per class

- Group work, helping others = CPs

Quests (required to pass)

- **Research Quest:** up to 40 XPs and 30 CPs
- **Overview Quest:** up to 50 XPs

To pass

- **Level 5:** 300 XPs and 110 CPs, plus quests (minimum; B)
- **Level 6:** 340 XPs and 180 CPs, plus quests (A)

3. Levels and badges

Think about achievements

Levels

- Can be for points
- Most textbooks have units
- Achieving a skill, such as knowing the alphabet
- Progression – higher is harder

Badges

- Can be for points
- Special achievements
- People like them
- Need to feel authentic



4. Epic meaning

Find “epic meaning” – something special



5. Renaming

Rename: *quests, tasks, party* (team) and more



Vocabulary

Game Mechanics

1. Party/Team
2. Experience points (XPs)
3. Quest
4. Level
5. Badges
6. Game constraints

Teaching

- a. Group work
- b. Stars, awards and such
- c. Grading
- d. Unit
- e. Large project
- f. Class rules

Matching exercise...

Game Mechanics

1. Party/Team
2. Experience points (XPs)
3. Quest
4. Level
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Teaching

- a. Group work
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Matching exercise...

Game Mechanics

1. Party/Team
2. Experience points (XPs)
3. Quest
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Teaching


- a. Group work
- b. Stars, awards and such
- c. Grading
- d. Unit
- e. Large project
- f. Class rules



Game mechanics...

Game Mechanics column: 30 points for each correct match – maximum 180 points.

If you got all 6, add 70 points for a total of 250! 

| | Startup | Engagemt | Adj. | Why gamify | Game mechanics (30-250) | | |
|------------|---------|----------|------|------------|--|--|--|
| Your alias | | | | |  *LEVEL 3! | | |

Gamifying: planning

1. Decide: Part of the course or the whole course
2. Calculate points for assignments
3. Think about achievements – levels or badges
4. Find “epic meaning”
5. Rename: *quests, tasks, party* (team)



Creating the environment in class

- Explain what you are doing and how points work
 - Everyone starts at zero and goes up
 - Types of points
 - How points convert to grades
- Show sample badges (easy to create online)
- Use game language – *quests, challenges, team/party*



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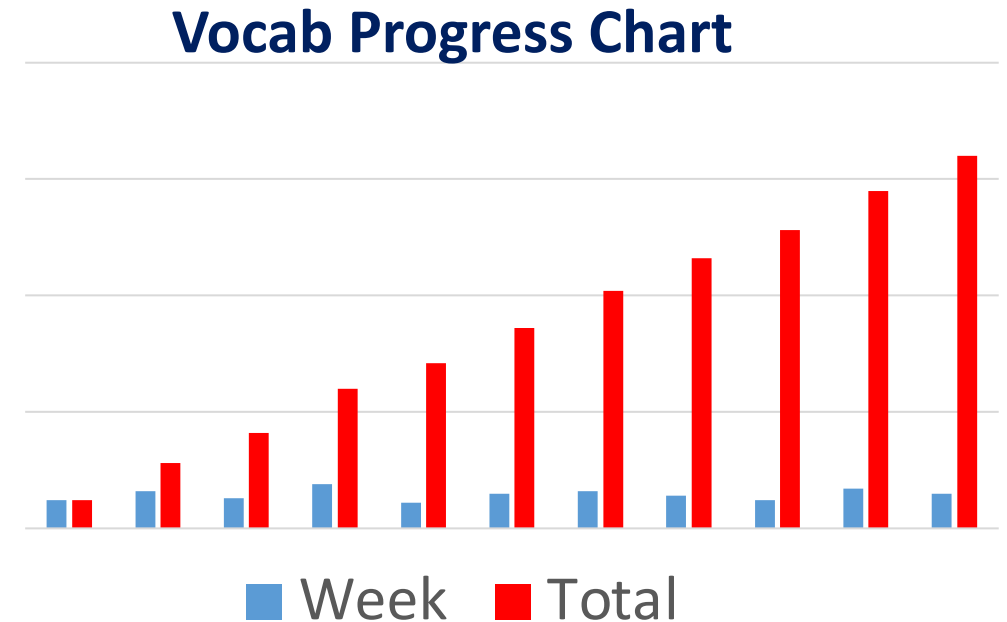
Sample gamified activities

1. Memorizing vocabulary for a weekly quiz
2. A weekly crossword puzzle
3. A spelling competition
4. Watching and responding to a 10-minute video clip

Vocabulary

Memorizing vocabulary for a weekly quiz

- **Progression**
- **Community collaboration** (pair/teamwork)
- **Challenge**
- **Points**
- **Ownership**

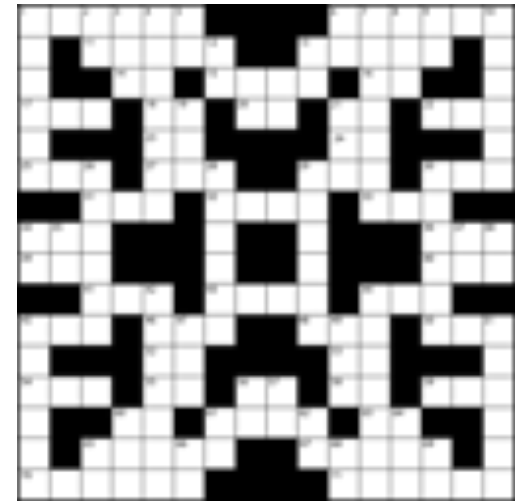


Crossword puzzle

A weekly crossword puzzle

Add game elements:

- **Countdown** (time limit)
- **Community collaboration/Team** (pairs or groups)
- **Points**
- **Achievement** (success!)
- **Ownership** (images, words, definitions)
- **Progression**



Spelling

A spelling competition

- **Teamwork – community collaboration** - is an interesting game element to add
- **Achievement**
- **Points**
- **Ownership**



Video - listening

Watching and responding to a 10-minute video clip

- **Community collaboration**
- **Points** – not just quizzes
- **Ownership** (student-generated questions)

Student-created video

- **Ownership**
- **Challenge**
- **Achievement**
- **Epic meaning**



Your ELT classroom: Gamifying activities

Share what you might do in your classroom in the chat.




- Try one of these activities?
- Try something new? (Be sure to tell us what!)
- Try to gamify your whole class?

Your path to gamification

If you commented in the chat about **what you will do**, give yourself:

- 50 points for repeating one of the previous ideas
- 100 points for a new idea
- 200 points for gamifying your course



| | Startup | Engagemt | Adj. | Why gamify | Game mechanics | Action (50-200) | |
|---------------|---------|----------|------|---------------|-------------------|---|--|
| Your alias | | | | | |  *LEVEL 4! | |



Quest completion: checking in!

Are you ready to...?

- **Basic:** explain how to gamify a class to a colleague
- **Intermediate:** gamify an activity or project in your class
- **Advanced:** gamify your whole class more effectively



Checking in!

How are you doing on your quest?



In any case, give yourself 50 points for getting through the webinar!

| | Startup | Engagemt | Adj. | Why gamify | Game mechanics | Action | Check-in (50 pts) |
|---------------|---------|----------|------|---------------|-------------------|--------|----------------------|
| Your alias | | | | | | | |

Enjoy the view!



Badges

Level 1: Thinker



Level 2: Planner



Level 3: Applier



Level 4: Gamifier!



References

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- Online Badge Maker. (2021). *3D badge maker*.
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Additional free resources and references are available on my website:
<https://www.deborahhealey.com>

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Thank you!

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Reflection Questions

1. Have you ever experienced “flow”—being so involved in a task that you feel mentally “transported” or so actively engaged that you don’t want to stop? Have you seen your students experiencing flow? What was the situation? How might you recreate or extend it to improve learning?
2. Which course topics or skills-practice activities do your ELLs find somewhat boring or tedious? How might you try to gamify them?
3. How would you introduce the concept of gamification to your class? What preparation or scaffolding (support) would be required for them to feel excited and ready to succeed?



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